



# External evaluation of the EUAA-Spain operating plan 2022-2023

## Ex post evaluation report

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## Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
ARC	Assessment of Reception Conditions
CAR	<i>Centro de Acogida de Refugiados</i> (Refugee Reception Centre)
CEAR	<i>Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado</i> (Spanish Commission for Refugee Assistance)
CREADE	<i>Centro de Recepción, Atención y Derivación</i> (Centre for Reception, Attention, and Transfers )
CSO	Civil society organisation
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OP	Operational plan
SEM	<i>Secretaría de Estado de Migraciones</i> (State Secretariat for Migration)
SOP	Standard operating procedure
TPD	Temporary Protection Directive
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## Executive summary

During 2022 and the first half of 2023, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) provided operational support in Spain, specifically in the area of reception, resettlement, and temporary protection. The **EUAA-Spain operational plan (OP) 2022-2023** aimed to:

- Enhance the capacity of national reception authorities to strategically define and implement a new reception model and reinforce overall institutional structures and processes;
- Enhance national reception authorities' capacity to offer adequate reception conditions through standardised reception processes and procedures across the country;
- Enhance capacity within the Spanish reception system through training and professional development, and;
- Enhance the capacity of national reception authorities to effectively implement the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).

**The support provided in Spain is considered effective, as evident from significant progress across the four measures.** Notably, the Agency's support contributed to the implementation of Royal Decree 220/2022, leading to the establishment of a new model for funding management of reception resources ('concerted action/social concert'). The EUAA's assistance played a pivotal role in strengthening the *Centros de Acogida de Refugiados* (Refugee Reception Centres) and other reception facilities through personnel deployment. Moreover, the Agency successfully developed and implemented a comprehensive training plan and provided training to over 1 500 governmental and non-governmental personnel. The introduction of protocols for workflows in the *Centros de Recepción, Atención y Derivación* (Centres for Reception, Attention, and Transfers (CREADEs), as well as the coordination of information provision, was highly appreciated by the Spanish authorities. However, delays were experienced relative to what was planned in terms of the definition of an organisational monitoring and evaluation structure and the establishment of data management coordination mechanisms, as well as due to the complexity of harmonising the different processes, procedures and workflows of the involved stakeholders.

It was noted that the **implementation of the OP was efficient**, due to the Agency's capacity to adapt by reallocating budget lines according to the needs and new priorities identified during the implementation of the OP.

**The relevance of the OP was confirmed by the fact that the next iteration of the OP provides continuity to most of the measures included in the OP 2022-2023.** Moreover, the **EUAA's capacity to adapt to changes in social and institutional priorities was visible**, as was its rapid and effective response to the requests expressed by the authorities. This was seen, for instance, with the inclusion of additional EUAA support to what was originally planned to address the challenges of implementing the TPD and its integration into the CREADE team.

Regarding the internal and external coherence of the OP, most of the stakeholders consulted highlighted **that the four priority measures of the OP were complementary and that coordination between actors and strategies was key to their implementation.**



It is noteworthy that some interviewees highlighted **an overlap in tasks assigned to the EUAA and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**. While both organisations were responsible for providing information, the content of the information differed due to their differing mandates and roles. Following a needs assessment and subsequent request by the national authorities, the EUAA provided information on temporary protection (written and oral) through information points. All information provision material was drafted and validated jointly with the national authorities. To ensure complementarity, the EUAA, together with other actors, referred persons seeking information to other organisations. For example, third-country nationals seeking information on access to the asylum procedure were referred to UNHCR. Coordination is further ensured through field level management teams on the side of the national authorities.

Finally, the European Union (EU) **added value of the OP was considered very good**. The EUAA's support was valued by the SEM and other authorities, and while changes would have taken place without the support of the EUAA, they would have done so at a slower rate and would have potentially been less in line with European standards.

Following on from this evaluation of the Spain OP 2022-23, recommendations were made to improve the EUAA's work in the short, medium, and long term as follows.

**Recommendation 1: Ensure better alignment between the OP measures and the timetable foreseen for their implementation, adapting to changes as relevant.**

The EUAA should consider carrying out prospective planning and monitoring (with the SEM's agreement) to identify potential obstacles to timely implementation, design possible alternatives, streamline decision making and reorientate the OP's implementation over time. This planning should anticipate changes in the context and should consider the actors and their capacities (e.g., the organisational structure of the administration and the specific roles of stakeholders).

**Recommendation 2: Promote a knowledge management model.**

The model should, in a structured and systematic way, translate the experience gained by the different actors during the implementation of the OP into lessons learned and systematise the initiatives of the Spanish reception model that can contribute to its success. In this way, the knowledge generated in practice can be further exploited to achieve the projected results and optimise the decision-making process. The model could include the activities of identification, adaptation, transfer or socialisation, storage and application of the information obtained.

**Recommendation 3: Adopt a change management approach that promotes agility, flexibility, innovation, and critical thinking in the implementation of measures.**

The EUAA should consider:

- introducing mechanisms (sessions, workshops, material, etc.) to keep technical teams informed about the planned changes, their consequences, the actions to be implemented, and their role in them. Information should be clear, up-to-date, and easy to find.
- Elaborating, with the agreement of the SEM, maps of actors including those outside the OP, to identify the impact they may have on the activities.
- Ensuring that protocols are flexible enough to adapt to the capacities of different actors and their workload, including when conditions change.



- Reinforcing the training plan areas that foster this capacity among teams, through innovation, critical thinking, resilience, and other soft skills.

**Recommendation 4: Assess the need among the Spanish authorities to expand the pool of external trainers in the training plan.**

This could be achieved by involving more experts external to the Spanish authorities and civil society organisations already involved (e.g., experts from academia) to broaden perspectives on specific topics.



## 1. Introduction: purpose and scope

The aim of this report is to present the results of the evaluation of the operational plan (OP) agreed between the EUAA and Spain for the period January 2022 to June 2023<sup>1</sup>.

The aim of the evaluation exercise was to provide a final evaluation of the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023. It concerns a reflective exercise reviewing the success of the EUAA's support in contributing to the projected results. The evaluation report offers a retrospective and objective assessment of the degree to which the intended results have been met, identifies the reasons for any shortcomings and suggests lessons learned from these interventions that might be useful to the EUAA in the design and implementation of future interventions, in Spain and beyond.

In line with the [European Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines](#), the evaluation assessed the **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and EU added value** of the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 in a proportionate manner. Aside from the general evaluation questions associated with these criteria, the following priority evaluation questions were addressed in particular:

- Priority question 1: What lessons can be learned from the Spain OP, as the first OP to be exclusively focused on reception?
- Priority question 2: To what extent was the EUAA able to appropriately respond to changes in priorities and resources during the implementation of the OP?

To answer these questions, the evaluation combines evidence from secondary data (notably monitoring data from the EUAA, the OP document, the evaluation and management response of the previous OP), with primary data collected through stakeholder interviews with the Spanish authorities, international organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) and EUAA staff. These sources of information were used to provide an in-depth assessment of the results of the intervention (see Annex 1 for more details on the methodology). Based on the results, the evaluation draws conclusions and presents lessons learnt from the implementation of the intervention, in view of a next generation of OPs.

## 2. Intended results of the action

### 2.1. Description of the action and its intended results

The EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 was initially signed for the period January 2022 to December 2023. A mutual decision was taken between the Spanish authorities and the EUAA to finalise it early, at the end of June 2023, and seek to agree a new multiannual OP. Thus, the evaluation covers the 18-month implementation period. The main national counterparts were the *Secretaría de Estado de Migraciones* (State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)) and its different directorates-general and sub-directorates general, particularly the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Attention and Integration of

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<sup>1</sup> The EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 was initially signed for the period January 2022 to December 2023. A mutual decision was made to finalise it early and look to agree on a new multiannual OP, at the end of June 2023.



Immigration and the Directorate-General for Reception Management and International and Temporary Protection and the Sub-directorate General of Migration Analysis.

The OP contains four measures with the following intended outcomes (objectives) and outputs (see intervention logic in Annex 2).

**Measure 1: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to strategically define and implement a new reception model and reinforce overall institutional structures and processes.**

- Output 1.1: Strengthened capacity of the SEM within the framework of the design and implementation of the new reception model.
- Output 1.2: Strengthened capacity of the SEM on organisational change management.
- Output 1.3: Support provided to increase the capacity, according to EU standards, of the state-managed reception network.
- Output 1.4: Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities for optimisation of data management across the reception system.
- Output 1.5: Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities to identify, access, plan and manage available funding mechanisms.

Through the first measure, the OP sought to support the authorities in defining a new model for a reception system for international protection, including through offering support with organisational change and coordination mechanisms to assist in its implementation. The EUAA also sought to provide support to the design of new reception centres, and the design, piloting and implementation of new digital architecture to optimise data management. Moreover, in continuation of the support provided in 2021, the EUAA sought to support the authorities in identifying, accessing and planning for the management of funding mechanisms.

**Measure 2: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to offer standardised reception processes and procedures across the country.**

- Output 2.1: Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on reception site management and coordination.
- Output 2.2: Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to reception and vulnerability.
- Output 2.3: Enhanced preparedness and response to emergencies.
- Output 2.4: Strengthened and supported the implementation of the national resettlement or relocation programmes and schemes by the Member State's authorities.

The second measure concerned the smooth operation of reception processes and procedures, through support with site management, coordination between relevant actors, and the establishment and implementation of workflows and operating procedures, including for the handling of vulnerable cases and the provision of information. This measure also included the introduction of the EUAA's Assessment of Reception Conditions (ARC) tool, adapted to the Spanish context. The measure also concerned capacity building in relation to preparedness and contingency planning to better manage emergencies, and support for the implementation of EU resettlement and relocation schemes.





### **Measure 3: Enhanced capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development and related training tools and material.**

- Output 3.1: Strengthened knowledge, skills and attitudes of personnel working in the Spanish reception system.
- Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity of the National authorities to train their personnel and partner entities through establishing a national pool of trainers.

The third measure of the OP is unique in that it specifically covers training. The EUAA sought to support the authorities and relevant partners in establishing and implementing an annual training plan, offering relevant training, coaching and translating training material. This measure also sought to strengthen the training capacity of the reception authorities through participation in EUAA train-the-trainer sessions.

### **Measure 4: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to effectively implement the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).**

- Output 4.1: Strengthened capacity of the National reception authorities on reception site coordination for the beneficiaries of temporary protection in the CREADEs.
- Output 4.2: Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on the harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to the reception of beneficiaries of temporary protection.

The fourth measure concerns the TPD and was added to the OP in response to the war in Ukraine in May 2022. The EUAA sought to support the conduct of a joint assessment of needs with regards to temporary protection in Spain, provide support to centre organisational flow management, provide data management and administrative support, carry out information provision and provide interpretation services, as required. The EUAA also sought to improve the capacity of the authorities in this context through the design and implementation of workflows as well as drafting of standard operating procedures (SOPs), including through the improvement of operational tools, as well as training and capacity building in relation to the TPD.

## **2.2. Points of comparison**

This section outlines the situation prior to the implementation of the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 to highlight the points of comparison relative to what is presented in Chapter 3 of the report on the current state of play.

In 2021, 41 945 arrivals were registered by sea and land throughout that year, a slight decrease compared to 2020 when 42 097 arrivals were registered<sup>2,3</sup>. The large number of arrivals, particularly in the Canary Islands (22 316 in 2021 and 23 271 in 2020), put significant **pressure on the Spanish**

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<sup>2</sup> In addition, there was an increase in international protection applicants received through air borders, with a total of 1,589 people by the end of 2021 (CEAR, 2022: [EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2022 CEAR ENGLISH.pdf](#))

<sup>3</sup> *Ministerio de Interior de España* (2021): [https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/prensa/balances-e-informes/2021/24\\_informe\\_quincenal\\_acumulado\\_01-01\\_al\\_31-12-2021.pdf](https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/prensa/balances-e-informes/2021/24_informe_quincenal_acumulado_01-01_al_31-12-2021.pdf)



**reception system** which was not prepared to deal with the number of non-EU nationals arriving in the country. In response, the EUAA and the Spanish authorities signed the first OP for Spain in 2021 to support the Spanish authorities, mainly in the field of reception. Moreover, to respond to the high influx of arrivals, the budget allocated by the Spanish government to the SEM for 2022 was significantly increased in relation to the previous year (17 %) and emphasised the enhancement and enlargement of the pool of publicly managed reception centres and the securing of funding for CSOs<sup>4</sup>.

In particular, a **need was identified to standardise reception procedures and conditions across reception centres in Spain**. The **provision of operational support to Spain by the EUAA in 2021** thus supported the Spanish authorities with the **transition towards a new model for reception**. The Spanish reception system is a mixed system consisting of a public network of reception centres directly managed by the SEM and other reception facilities managed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The SEM directly manages four reception facilities for asylum seekers and 20 NGO run reception centres for asylum seekers, through funds granted by the SEM. According to the Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (Spanish Committee for Refugee Assistance)<sup>5</sup>, in 2021, reception centres in Spain had an overall capacity of 9 915 places, of which 400<sup>6</sup> were places in *Centros de Acogida de Refugiados* (Refugee Reception Centres (CARs)).

Through the EUAA-Spain OP 2021, the Agency supported the Spanish authorities in the reflection process on the definition of the new model for reception. Additionally, the EUAA supported the harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to vulnerability and information provision in emergency reception in the Canary Islands. During 2021, the EUAA provided a wide range of professional development activities, including the delivery of training to 280 participants and the certification of three SEM trainers in the reception module following their participation in the Agency's Train-the-Trainers programme. In addition, the ARC tool was tested in two sites in the Canary Islands (Las Raíces and Las Canteras) and related assessment reports were drafted, thus meeting the objective of piloting and testing the tool in Spain. However, the drafting of the organisational change management plan could not be drafted by the end of the implementation of the EUAA-Spain OP 2021 and stakeholders noted the need to further work on the standardisation of data management procedures. Similarly, the planned Resettlement Framework Agreement could not be established by the end of 2021 and was postponed to 2022, although the Spanish authorities participated in six Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network meetings over 2021.

**The evaluation of the EUAA-Spain OP 2021 concluded that its effectiveness was sufficiently high, meeting the needs of national authorities.** Although certain areas experienced implementation delays, notable progress was observed across various measures, largely attributed to the collaborative efforts between different centres and sectors of the EUAA and the establishment of cross-cutting working groups. The recommendations arising from the evaluation are presented in Annex 4 along with the corresponding response by the EUAA on how to address them.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones en los PGE de 2022* (October 2021): [PGE-2022-Inclusion \(lamoncloa.gob.es\)](https://lamoncloa.gob.es)

<sup>5</sup> Spanish Commission for Refugee Assistance (2022): [Informe-Anual-2022.pdf \(cear.es\)](https://cear.es)

<sup>6</sup> Data from 2019:  
<https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/documents/20121/0/Presentaci%c3%b3n+MISSM+PGE2023.pdf/644bdc0c-3ed1-2785-2fe8-c74a2be1f920?t=166542548666>



### 3. Implementation of the action: current state of play

This section explains what happened during the implementation of the OP and presents the state of play. The data presented below have been extracted from internal monitoring data shared by the EUAA for the period 2022 and the first half of 2023. The monitoring data includes target values per output against the achieved values, thus providing a quantitative overview of what has been achieved over that period. The reasons for under- or overachievement relative to the foreseen targets are provided in the next chapter on evaluation findings.

#### **Measure 1: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to strategically define and implement a new reception model and reinforce overall institutional structures and processes.**

Five out of the eight foreseen outputs (62 %) under this measure were fully achieved while three (38 %) were partly achieved over the course of 2022. During the first half of 2023, three out of the four (75 %) envisaged outputs for this period were achieved and one (25 %) was partly achieved.

Over the first quarter of 2022, the EUAA, together with other stakeholders, provided support in the process of reflection on the definition of a new reception model for Spain. This model was approved in [Royal Decree 220/2022](#) by the Council of Ministers. Additionally, a series of consultation activities were carried out on the new financing systems relating to the new model (*conciertos sociales*) in the context of support provided by an EUAA expert. This funding model, which is included in the abovementioned Royal Decree, came into force in January 2023 and aims to provide more secure and stable funding to NGOs responsible for the management of reception centres in Spain. There were no requests by the SEM to deploy a reception support team to enhance the coordination mechanisms related to the implementation of the new model, despite it being foreseen as part of the OP.

The envisaged organisational monitoring and evaluation structure was partially defined in 2022. A needs assessment on monitoring and evaluation tools was concluded and a comprehensive report with proposals for support was shared with stakeholders. However, the deployment of two organisational change management personnel to support with the design, planning and implementation of the required institutional changes was not requested by the SEM, despite being included in the OP.

Over 2022, all four foreseen initiatives and tools to ensure compliance with EU Reception Standards in the CARs were implemented. During the first two quarters of 2023, three tools/initiatives (compared to the two envisaged) were delivered by the EUAA, including the translation into Spanish of a new EUAA guide on a modular approach for the construction of reception centres.

In 2022, all of the foreseen number of tools/reports on data management (i.e., seven) were produced, updated or implemented through the provision of support by an external EUAA statistics expert. In the first half of 2023, 25 tools/reports out of the 28 envisaged were delivered. The establishment of data management coordination mechanisms was partly achieved in 2022 as two out of the four envisaged mechanisms were put in place. Finally, development of a PowerBI® template for weekly reporting on reception places and a draft analysis of the SIRIA<sup>7</sup> data system were delivered.

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<sup>7</sup> Information system on programmes for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers from the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (*'Sistema de Información sobre Programas para Refugiados, Inmigrantes y Solicitantes de Asilo'*).



All envisaged support activities regarding the use of available funding mechanisms were successfully supported and implemented during 2022 through the deployment of an EU-funding expert during the third and fourth quarter of 2022. Four out of the six envisaged projects in the context of the new Thematic Facility funding mechanism were supported in 2022. By the first half of 2023, all the envisaged projects (six out of six) were implemented and supported by the EUAA.

**Measure 2: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to offer standardised reception processes and procedures across the country.**

Five out of the 11 (45 %) planned outputs under measure 2 were fully implemented during 2022 while six were partly implemented (55 %). During the first half of 2023, five of the 13 planned outputs (38 %) were overachieved, four were achieved (30 %) and four were partly achieved (30 %).

As initially envisaged, the four publicly managed CARs were supported with deployment of EUAA experts for the first time in 2022. Moreover, the three envisaged SOPs were developed to increase the capacity of the SEM to allocate beneficiaries within the national reception network in 2022. During the first half of 2023, all four foreseen CARs were supported by the EUAA with multidisciplinary asylum support teams. Additionally, 27 follow-up visits to CARs (compared to the 24 foreseen) were conducted in the first quarter of 2023. These regular visits aimed to strengthen coordination both within the EUAA team and between the asylum support teams, the EUAA central coordination team and the CAR management.

In 2022, five (compared to the three envisaged) SOPs were finalised and shared with the Spanish authorities. All the queries received were addressed and resolved by the helpdesk within the implementation of the SOPs. Over the first two quarters of 2023, one SOP was finalised and shared with the authorities. In 2022, 87 support/follow-up visits (compared to the 72 foreseen) were conducted by the roving team to support the entities managing reception centres in implementing the information provision protocol developed in 2021. Additionally, 14 out of the 18 visits envisaged by the roving team to support the implementation of SOPs took place during the first half of 2023.

Ten out of the 15 ARC assessment visits were conducted in 2022 and seven assessment visits (compared to the eight envisaged) to reception centres were conducted during the first half 2023. During the first quarter of the year, the assessment tool was further adapted to accommodate the lessons learnt during the piloting phase that took place in 2022 and the new instructions for the *conciertos sociales*.

In 2022, all four envisaged deliverables were developed within the framework of the National Protocol on High Migration Influx (*‘Protocolo de grandes llegadas’*). Five visits to disembarkation points took place over the first half of 2023, compared to the eight originally planned.

Concerning resettlement support, the Spanish authorities participated in 15 (out of the 17 envisaged) EUAA Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network activities. In 2022, 10 % of pre-departure orientation tools/material were developed/adapted with the EUAA’s support. As envisaged, one report with recommendations for the enhancement of information provision activities on resettlement was shared with the Spanish authorities. Five interview missions were supported with interpretation



services against the three planned, and the Spanish authorities participated in four out of the eight resettlement meetings.

Regarding relocation, 606 relocation matches of candidates to Member States were completed, exceeding the target value of 369. By June 2023, 11 (compared to the five foreseen) relocation lists/proposals were shared with Member States.

**Measure 3: Enhanced capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development and related training tools and material.**

All activities (100 %) envisaged under measure 3 were overachieved over the period 2022-June 2023. During 2022, the EUAA supported national authorities in establishing and implementing the annual training plan. In 2022, 1 032 individuals (representing a total of 1 485 participations) attended training sessions organised by the EUAA. Out of these, 974 individuals attended training sessions that were recorded directly under this OP, compared to the 550 planned. These sessions had a satisfaction rate of 93 % (compared to the targeted 80 %). In 2022, 44 individuals (representing a total of 46 participations) took part in the Train-the-Trainers sessions (compared to the 33 planned).

During the first half of 2023, 771 participants attended training sessions organised by the EUAA. Out of these, 755 individuals attended sessions that were recorded directly under this OP. The content of the training sessions included: 'Temporary protection: understanding the current framework in the context of the war in Ukraine', 'Human trafficking', 'Introduction to the legal framework on fundamental rights and international protection in the EU', 'Interpreting in the reception context', 'Reception of vulnerable groups: evaluation of the needs and design of interventions', amongst others.

**Measure 4: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to effectively implement the TPD.**

In 2022, three out of the four activities (75 %) envisaged under measure 4 were overachieved, while one was partly achieved. During the first quarter of 2023, three (75 %) were overachieved while two were partly achieved (25 %).

Following the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, four CREADEs were created in Alicante, Málaga, Barcelona, and Madrid to respond to the needs of people fleeing Ukraine. Since their creation in March 2022, 103 284 Ukrainians<sup>8</sup> have been registered in these centres and have been provided support and guidance during their temporary protection application. Since the activation of the temporary protection mechanism in March 2023, Spain has granted temporary protection to more than 180 000 Ukrainians<sup>9</sup>. In 2022, 12 initiatives (compared to the eight envisaged) were implemented with the EUAA's support to improve the capacity and performance of the SEM and implementing partners at the CREADE. During the first two quarters of 2023, 6 226 queries were addressed and resolved through the hotline compared to the planned 5 000, overachieving the target values. All the persons subject to temporary protection were supported by the EUAA's information provision activities. During the first

<sup>8</sup> Ministerio de Inclusion , Seguridad Social y migraciones: [Workbook: ucrania\\_16490687789290 \(tableau.com\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> Ministerio del Interior de España (2023): [Ministerio del Interior | España supera las 180.000 protecciones temporales a refugiados de Ucrania](#)



two quarters of 2023, 13 483 out of the 17 500 persons intended to be targeted by the EUAA's information provision were supported.

In 2022, 11 SOPs (compared to the nine foreseen) for the CREADE were finalised and shared with the Spanish authorities while during the first two quarters of 2023, 11 (compared to the seven planned) were finalised. In 2022, seven out of the 12 support/follow-up visits for the implementation and update of the SOPs of the CREADE were conducted. During the first two quarters of 2023, three visits took place (compared to the five planned).

## 4. Evaluation findings

This section presents the findings associated with the five evaluation criteria and their analysis, incorporating the results of the desk review and the series of interviews conducted with EUAA staff, the Spanish authorities and CSOs.

### 4.1. To what extent was the action successful and why?

The Spanish authorities and CSOs considered the **measures of the OP 2022-2023 to be coherent with each other and that their implementation was effective** as procedures were improved and capacities were strengthened. The OP was perceived to be a good framework as it integrated both strategic and operational aspects and provided support in relation to the identified needs (see section 5.3). However, stakeholders also pointed out the complexity and the high level of ambition of the OP. Considering the broad scope of the measures, it was noted that its implementation requires structural changes and a strong commitment from all the stakeholders involved. For this reason, it was difficult to set a fixed timeframe for the achievement of the objectives, and their intended impacts will only be seen in the longer term. In this context, the **extension of the implementation period** for the next OP iteration (covering the period 2024-2026) was seen as a **positive development** by the Spanish authorities, precisely because it will provide sustainability and allow for projections over the longer term.

**The relationship between the inputs invested in the implementation of the OP and the outputs obtained, i.e., efficiency, was positive overall.** This assessment is based on three premises:

- On the one hand, the inputs invested were sufficient for the results achieved, given that it was not necessary to increase the projected budget. However, given that not all of the intended results in measures 1 and 2 were achieved, it is not possible to assess whether the resources allocated for the OP would have been sufficient to achieve them;
- On the other hand, in measure 3 the inputs invested were proportionate to the results achieved, considering that without increasing the initially allocated resources, the projected targets were exceeded. In relation to proportionality, it is important to note, however, that measure 2, which had the largest budget allocation, was also the measure where the lowest percentage of results was achieved relative to what was foreseen, followed by measure 1 (see Chapter 3);
- Interviewees agreed that the benefits of the OP outweighed potential costs. In this sense, it is worth noting that, for the different actors consulted, the relationship between inputs (i.e., costs, human resources, and time invested) and outputs was positive. This is because they recognised





that the budget had been adjusted in line with the absorption capacity of the authorities and that the benefits of the OP compensated for any potential investments made.

In terms of the **overall effectiveness of the OP, the implementation rate of the OP was rather high**, as reflected in Chapter 3 of the report. Clear progress was made in key areas such as in support for the implementation of Royal Decree 220/2022, including support for the setting up of a new model for funding and management of reception resources (concerted action/social concert), the reinforcement of the CARs and other reception centres (through the deployment of personnel), the establishment and implementation of a training plan, the design of protocols on workflows in the CREADEs, and coordination of the provision of information.

Additionally, the establishment of EUAA operational offices in Spain with a consolidated operational capacity and the existence of focal points within the administration was **perceived to be an enabling factor which contributed to the effectiveness of the support provided by the EUAA**. This presence allowed the authorities to accelerate the implementation of some of the actions (for instance, the quick deployment in the CREADEs) and supported the establishment of working groups in the different intervention areas. In this context, the cluster system for managing administration processes, resources and finances was highlighted as further strengthening the efficient management and implementation of the OP. Furthermore, national authorities and the EUAA consider that a degree of trust has been built up over time, enhancing the dialogue and cooperation among these stakeholders in relation to the design and implementation of shared solutions.

Several challenges impacting the effectiveness of the OP were also identified. These included, according to the EUAA and national authorities, the **nature of the Spanish model, most notably the mixed nature of the reception management system<sup>10</sup> and mixed migration flows** which required the EUAA to adapt to a high extent the support provided. Additional challenges pointed out by the EUAA were the turnover in the SEM's management positions over the implementation period of the OP and, at the beginning of the implementation of the OP, the difficulties in finding external experts who are both proficient in the subject matter and the Spanish language. Moreover, the authorities at times found it difficult to keep up with the pace of implementation of the OP due to the changing context, existing priorities and consequences this had on the SEM's absorption capacity, leading to the need to reduce the implementation pace.

The level of effectiveness of each measure is discussed below.

**Measure 1: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to strategically define and implement a new reception model and reinforce overall institutional structures and processes.**

The technical support provided by the EUAA under this measure **was perceived by the authorities to have been instrumental in accelerating the adoption and implementation** (to a certain extent) of Royal Decree 220/2022. The support of the EUAA, particularly with the alignment of the legislation with EU standards (given their expertise and experiences in other countries) was perceived to be very

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<sup>10</sup> Spain has a mixed reception system with a public network of migration centres and other reception facilities, in addition to programmes providing care for asylum applicants, which are managed by entities, such as NGOs, charities and religious organisations. Consequently, in Spain, unlike other EU countries, the functioning of the system does not depend exclusively on the State.



positive and was reflected in an improvement of institutional processes and structures. The support provided by the EUAA through staff with expertise in reception models and practices developed in other countries was particularly appreciated by the Spanish authorities.

Likewise, the **creation of new reception centres run by the State** (as part of the objective of expanding the reception network managed by the State and within the framework of the recovery plan) was highlighted as an important action. Furthermore, **the role of the EUAA in helping to define criteria and draw up protocols for the design, adaptation, operation, services, and location of these centres was perceived to be effective.** This was particularly visible in the activities implemented in the Canary Islands, where the presence of the EUAA in the field was considered important in promoting and shaping the three centres located on the islands (i.e., Las Canteras, Las Raíces and Canarias 50). However, none of the planned new centres in the Canary Islands and other locations were operational at the time of writing this report because they were being renovated or were still being designed, resulting in the partial achievement of the outputs set out in Chapter 3.

Regarding the **optimisation of data management** in the reception system, stakeholders agreed that progress was not as expected and tangible results were not yet visible, notably because the Spanish administration and CSOs have their own programmes and procedures in place and time is needed to adapt them. However, it was recognised that these results take time to be achieved and the process was underway, with the permanent support of an external expert from the EUAA to the Sub-directorate General of Migration Analysis in the SEM to improve the digital architecture (based on the update of SIRIA, the data system used by the administration).

In relation to change management, the **needs assessment on monitoring and evaluation tools carried out by the EUAA** should be highlighted as a positive input for monitoring the process of harmonisation of standards in the new model of social concertation of the reception system. This last point was studied in connection with the ARC indicators and the setting up of the new funding model of the reception system.

Finally, in relation to strengthening the authorities' capacity to identify, access, plan and manage available funding mechanisms, the EUAA has been working with the relevant Sub-directorate General and has, among other things, contributed to the preparation of the new Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund programme and the closure of the previous one. According to the authorities this is an issue to be strengthened in the next OP, as the implementation of the new national Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund programme will gather pace in the coming years.

## **Measure 2: Enhanced capacity of national reception authorities to offer standardised reception processes and procedures across the country.**

Concerning measure 2, **progress has been made in the standardisation of processes and procedures through the elaboration of different protocols**, most notably the protocol on information provision and on vulnerability, respectively. However, this has not been achieved at the planned speed. On the one hand, the complexity of harmonising the different processes and procedures of the authorities and CSOs takes time, particularly in a multifaceted system with multiple stakeholders involved. Also, at the root of the delays is the complexity in harmonising the workflows proposed by the Agency with the administration's existing workload and workflows, as well as at times the difficulties in finding or





counting on experts in specialised areas. On the other hand, once the protocols have been designed, it is necessary to wait for approval before starting their implementation. There is also agreement among stakeholders that once these protocols (most notably the Information Provision Protocol) have been implemented, the effects require time to be observable.

The implementation of the Information Provision Protocol (in force since 2022) was recognised by the stakeholders consulted as highly needed, and its uptake is progressively taking place in centres run by the government and CSOs. The provision of permanent support by the EUAA in this process was considered a valuable contribution of the OP (in the elaboration of information material and in the monitoring of the protocol, for example). **The EUAA's technical support concerning the Vulnerability Protocol was particularly noteworthy.** Stakeholders recognised that it was relevant to adequately address the diversity and new characteristics of the profiles of those arriving in the country. However, this protocol has not been approved at the time of writing.

Support concerning **emergency preparedness and response**, through the provision of recommendations, information, and presentation of other similar cases, **was deemed effective in enhancing the capacity of national counterparts**, according to the Spanish administration and the CSOs. While they recognised the effectiveness of this support, they also acknowledged that there is still a lot that needs to be done.

The intervention by the EUAA in relocation processes exceeded the expected results. On the contrary, according to the authorities, the EUAA has not been actively involved in resettlement in the framework of this OP.

Perhaps one of **the most valued aspects of the cooperation under this measure is the deployment of personnel in the CARs and other reception centres** not only in terms of quantity, but also in terms of quality, i.e., the expertise and experience of the deployed personnel. Thus, in 2022 and 2023, the EUAA deployed statutory staff, temporary workers and external remunerated experts. This **increased the capacity of the national counterparts to provide adequate services to centre residents. It also had a positive effect on the improvement of procedures and processes** as it was possible to cover areas of action that might not have been covered otherwise. While the deployment of external experts was perceived as a positive aspect of the cooperation, some stakeholders pointed to the importance of them having better knowledge of the Spanish context as this was not always the case.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the **joint development of an assessment system by the EUAA and the administration to identify areas for improvement as part of this measure.** This system incorporates on-site visits and focuses on standardising procedures, enhancing reception conditions, and promoting coordinated action. During the implementation period of the OP 2022-2023, there was a notable increase in the number of ARC assessment visits conducted in reception centres with the tool having been adapted to the Spanish context, particularly compared to the previous OP (ten visits were conducted in 2022, compared to the two conducted in 2021). Although the target value set out at the beginning of the implementation period on the number of visits was only partially achieved (ten visits conducted instead of the originally planned 15), the higher number of visits compared to the previous OP indicates the national authorities' keen interest in further aligning reception conditions in the future.



Another notable achievement is the establishment of a roving team to support information provision in 2021, which was further reinforced in 2022.

**Measure 3: Enhanced capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development and related training tools and material.**

**The provision of training under measure 3, most notably the establishment and implementation of a training plan** was perceived as one of the most effective areas of support by both the authorities and CSOs. The high satisfaction rate<sup>11</sup> (93 % satisfaction rate achieved in 2022) and the high demand for training (1 803 stakeholders participated in the training over 2022 and the first half of 2023) illustrate this. The high level of satisfaction was maintained in 2023 (90.72 %). It is important to note that there was a **significant increase in the number of individuals trained compared to the EUAA-Spain 2021 OP** when 280 individuals were trained.

The establishment and implementation of an annual training plan by the EUAA contributed to the systematisation and consistency of the contents delivered, according to the stakeholders consulted. In this context, the coordination carried out by the EUAA and the fact that it has a specific team for the management of training was highlighted. The EUAA has adapted to the territoriality of the country by delivering the training sessions in Madrid, reducing staff travel and facilitating the attendance of participants. An aspect which was also appreciated was the fact that participants were grouped together based on their expertise and responsibilities, which favoured group cohesion across people who carry out similar tasks. It was pointed out that **this measure was particularly useful because it contributed to generating spaces for conversation and debate between staff with similar profiles on strategic issues and daily work**, which was seen as key for capacity building. Therefore, the EUAA provided a space for exchange which did not exist before. It is worth noting the significant increase of participants who took part in the Train-the-Trainers programme compared to the EUAA-Spain OP 2021.

During the implementation period of the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023, 46 participants (compared to the three who participated in 2021) took part in the Train-the-Trainers programme, exceeding the target values set at the beginning of the implementation period, as reflected in Chapter 3. However, there were differing views regarding the **establishment of a national pool of trainers** (training of trainers). Some stakeholders appreciated the fact that the team of trainers included mostly people from the national administration, thus improving and strengthening the capacity of the administrations. Furthermore, the fact that the training included CSO staff was positively perceived. In the future, it was suggested by all of the consulted authorities and members of the CSOs that it would be beneficial to involve more external experts and non-institutional actors (e.g., academia) in the training sessions to provide new or different perspectives. Trainers, for their part, referred to the challenge for government and CSO trainers to attribute sufficient time to the training sessions they deliver while fulfilling their regular tasks and responsibilities.

While the implementation of this measure was successfully achieved, it is important to note that the impacts on **strengthening knowledge, skills and attitudes will only become visible over time**. While

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<sup>11</sup> Satisfaction rates are the average of the responses provided by all participants in the training sessions, i.e., 1 666 participants.



participants acknowledged the importance of basing training content and tools on European standards, they also noted the need to further consider the specificities of the Spanish context.

**Measure 4: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to effectively implement the TPD.**

**The design of protocols on workflows in the CREADEs and the provision of information under measure 4** were highly appreciated by stakeholders.

The rapid response of the EUAA to the government's request for support for the CREADEs as well as its coordination with the work teams in the existing centres was considered to be very effective. An important **contribution was the support provided by the EUAA in the design, implementation and updating of SOPs** (protocols, workflows and tools), as well as increasing the knowledge of CREADES<sup>19</sup>, especially interpreters, about the TPD. **The creation of the hotline was highlighted as a very successful practice** that made it possible to reach additional beneficiaries of temporary protection.

On the other hand, it was noted that **the focus on temporary protection had at the beginning of the implementation of the OP diverted efforts and resources towards a priority that was not initially foreseen** (despite being relevant). Concerning the **coherence and complementarity of the OP 2022-2023** with the EUAA's actions and other interventions with similar objectives, the assessment was generally positive.

It is noteworthy that some interviewees highlighted **an overlap in tasks assigned to the EUAA and UNHCR**. While both organisations were responsible for providing information, the content of the information differed due to their differing mandates and roles. Following a needs assessment and subsequent request by the national authorities, the EUAA provided information on temporary protection (written and oral) through information points. All information provision material was drafted and validated jointly with the national authorities. To ensure complementarity, the EUAA – together with other actors – referred persons seeking information to other organisations. For example, third-country nationals seeking information on access to the asylum procedure were referred to UNHCR. Coordination is further ensured through field level management teams on the side of the national authorities.

The OP was perceived to be consistent with the European framework and objectives. It was also observed that the EUAA team had effectively coordinated its efforts, thus contributing to **the alignment of the OP with the EUAA's reception strategy and ensured compliance with European standards** and regulations. Finally, it is worth noting that the OP was complemented with support from the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan of the Government of Spain.

## 4.2. How did the Agency make a difference through the action?

There was general agreement amongst the stakeholders consulted that **the support provided by the EUAA through the OP 2022-2023 brought about significant added value**.

**The support provided by the EUAA through the OP accelerated decision making in Spain and helped address issues which would probably not have been addressed in the EUAA's absence.** In this



context, the Spanish authorities noted that the EUAA provided useful information as well as analytical and management capacity. Examples of this included the drafting of information and vulnerability protocols, as well as the protocols for the harmonisation and standardisation of procedures and workflows in the reception centres.

The EUAA's contributions, especially in the form of resources and personnel, **enabled the implementation of actions that would have been difficult to implement before the Agency's intervention**. Examples of this included the improvements of workflows and processes and the training plan, the provision of specific expertise, and support concerning longer-term planning.

The **EUAA provided a relevant external assessment to understand the state of play**, as well as the assurance of this having been undertaken by a reputable and legitimate organisation. The needs assessment carried out for the elaboration of the OP was highly valued by the Spanish authorities as it helped them identify areas for improvement and cooperation. Additionally, the support of the EUAA enabled the Spanish authorities and CSOs to **learn about the experiences and good practices of other countries**, which not only strengthened their capacity but also allowed them to build synergies with other stakeholders and to explore additional areas for cooperation. Thus, **the provision of expertise by the EUAA was considered very valuable as it contributed to broadening the knowledge of the Spanish authorities and CSOs on priority issues**, such as identifying and addressing vulnerabilities, which was one of the most valued aspects of the EUAA's support.

Further to a request by the SEM, the **EUAA also fostered interaction amongst stakeholders, allowing room for debate on structural issues**. This, in turn, made it possible to multiply results and broaden impacts, as well as to advance the standardisation of criteria, processes and procedures. The discussion groups promoted through the EUAA as part of the training plan, for example, were very important in this regard.

Considering the aforementioned points, it was commonly acknowledged that **in the absence of the EUAA's support, changes would have taken place, but at a slower pace and they would have potentially been less in line with European standards**. Indeed, the EUAA has around 20 persons deployed in the CARs who have been fundamental to the services currently provided by these centres.

In addition, according to the Spanish authorities and CSOs, the presence of the Agency in the country and the support provided in the framework of the EUAA gives them confidence that they are on the right track concerning reception standards and procedures, despite the specific characteristics of the Spanish reception field. Within this context, the EUAA highlighted its role in relocation, defined in the workflow established by the European Commission.

### 4.3. Is the action relevant?

**The support provided by the Agency was relevant to respond to the challenges faced by the Spanish reception system**, most notably, the volume of arrivals as well as the different types of flows and profiles as set out in Chapter 2.2. **These challenges called for the strengthening of the Spanish reception system, making the support provided by the Agency relevant**. The ability of the Agency to swiftly adapt to emerging needs following the crisis in Ukraine is exemplified by the amendment made



to the OP in May 2022 which introduced a measure supporting the enhancement of the authorities to effectively implement the TPD.

The participatory approach of the OP design contributed to the relevance of the measures as they responded to **pre-identified needs as well as to the priorities that emerged during its implementation**. Most stakeholders recognised that this was largely a consequence of the fact that the needs assessment justifying the OP was carried out jointly by the EUAA with the Spanish authorities. Furthermore, the fact that the OP 2022-2023 built on the EUAA-Spain OP 2021 contributed to its relevance and allowed for the incorporation of lessons learned from previous collaborations. Despite the relevance of the intervention, the need to further adapt the support provided by the EUAA to the Spanish context was a recurring request made by stakeholders.

**Measure 1: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to strategically define and implement a new reception model and reinforce overall institutional structures and processes.**

The Spanish authorities considered the support provided by the EUAA to the implementation of the new model of social concertation for the reception system to be relevant, especially in relation to the humanitarian programme. They also considered the Agency's contribution to the **location, construction and organisation of the new state-run centres in accordance with European standards to be very relevant**. On the other hand, both the authorities and CSOs saw the urgency of having a unified, comprehensive, agile, and accessible data system for all stakeholders involved with the assessment of the Agency.

**Measure 2: Enhanced capacity of the national reception authorities to offer standardised reception processes and procedures across the country.**

The mixed nature of the management of the reception system in Spain, as described in Chapter 2.2, calls for coordination and for the establishment of consistent workflows and SOPs which centralise the management of the reception system in Spain. Thus, amongst the areas of support, the **Agency's technical support for the Vulnerability Protocol (designed in 2022) and its operationalisation through the development of the SOP was considered particularly relevant** to address the diversity and characteristics of new arrivals in the country. However, this protocol has not been approved at the time of writing.

The **self-assessment tool based on the ARC tool applied was important in identifying areas for improvement**, and the EUAA's efforts to adapt it to the needs of the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Attention and Integration of Immigration were highly appreciated. The Spanish OP was also a unique opportunity for the EUAA team to test and improve the tool. Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that not all stakeholders were convinced it was a relevant tool for assessing their facilities. Among the reasons provided by some stakeholders, such as the Directorate-General for Reception Management and International and Temporary Protection and CSOs, were that it did not



take into account the size of the different centres, that they already had a tool that serves a similar purpose or that it only focused on infrastructure and management, for example.<sup>12</sup>

**Measure 3: Enhanced capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development and related training tools and material.**

The relevance of the measure stemmed from a **persistent need, namely, the continuous professional development and training of stakeholders' work teams**. Furthermore, the selection of training areas was closely aligned with the identified needs, as determined through the needs assessment. Two key points deserve particular attention: firstly, under the new collaborative model, training remained relevant in standardising the knowledge level among the various stakeholders. Also, this measure remained crucial for national counterparts to assimilate European standards and regulations introduced by the new reception model, enabling them to effectively implement these guidelines.

**Measure 4: Enhanced capacity of national reception authorities to effectively implement the TPD.**

The significance of this measure stemmed primarily from the **need for the timely implementation of the TPD**. In 2022, temporary protection was granted to 161 037 persons fleeing from Ukraine to Spain. As explained in Chapter 3, after the outbreak of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, four CREADEs managed by the SEM were created to address the reception needs of persons fleeing the country. Additionally, the Spanish government adopted two orders extending the temporary protection to all Ukrainian nationals<sup>13</sup> and detailed the procedure to grant such status which included granting temporary protection within 24 hours after the lodging of an application. In this context, **the support provided by the EUAA played a pivotal role in organising, coordinating, and formalising the ongoing efforts**, particularly in a period when national authorities and stakeholders were primarily focused on taking action.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

This section presents the main conclusions of the analysis of the previous sections of this evaluation report, while highlighting good practices and lessons learned, and proposing some recommendations that could be useful for the EUAA's interventions both in Spain and in other countries.

### 5.1. Conclusions

**The effectiveness of the intervention in Spain is considered to be good.** Considerable progress was made across the four measures in spite of the changes made in the SEM's organisation and the new demands brought about by the Ukraine war. The EUAA, thus, was able to respond quickly and effectively to the request of national counterparts in line with what was originally agreed and to changing priorities. In fact, measures 3 and 4 were achieved as planned. Two outputs under measure

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<sup>12</sup> The ARC tool is the only tool developed by the EU based on the Reception Conditions Directive. Its aim is to assess the reception conditions not just on infrastructures and management but also on services provision, implementation of protocols and staff training.

<sup>13</sup> Temporary protection was extended to Ukrainian nationals, persons and stateless persons legally residing in Ukraine, Ukrainians staying (regularly or irregularly) in Spain before 24 February 2022, and their family members.





1 experienced delays relative to what was planned in the OP (though it is recognised that they were in progress at the time of writing and that the Agency had played a role in the results achieved). These are the definition of an organisational monitoring and evaluation structure and the establishment of data management coordination mechanisms. Concerning measure 2, progress was made but not at the desired speed due to the complexity of harmonising the different processes, procedures and workflows of the involved stakeholders. Particularly, the emergency reception centres could not be supported with EUAA reception experts as foreseen, as this was not requested by the SEM. Moreover, fewer ARC assessment visits were conducted compared to what was foreseen and the authorities participated in fewer EUAA Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Networks than originally planned.

In relation to priority question 2<sup>14</sup>, it was also noted that the activities were adequate to respond to the authorities' needs, and that the implementation was sufficiently efficient, due to the Agency's capacity to adapt by reallocating budget lines according to the needs and new priorities identified during the implementation of the OP.

**This OP has five notable accomplishments, each of which presents associated challenges that must be addressed in future actions to ensure the sustainability of these achievements.**

Firstly, the integration of European standards into the reception system was reinforced through the EUAA's recommendations and support. It is crucial to recognise the importance of continuously adapting these standards to Spain's migratory realities and the operational approaches of the various stakeholders involved in the system.

Secondly, the administration and entities gained valuable insights and knowledge through the EUAA's contributions, including experiences and best practices from other countries. This facilitated the development of potential partnerships that can be further enriched by the expertise and know-how of Spanish teams.

Thirdly, institutional capacities were expanded with the assistance of human resources provided by the EUAA. Where possible and without detriment to the need for specific thematic expertise, it is important to ensure an understanding of the Spanish context among the external experts involved in specific tasks associated with the OP.

Notable progress was made in standardising processes and procedures, with a focus on priority needs. The authorities stressed that the design and implementation of protocols should continue to allow for the necessary flexibility to adapt to the work of stakeholders when needed. Managing resistance to change, which is natural when adopting new criteria, work methods, and workflows, is particularly important at this stage.

Lastly, a training plan and a national group of trainers were established, integrating both governmental and non-governmental personnel. Recognising the potential benefits of involving a greater number of

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<sup>14</sup> To what extent was the EUAA able to appropriately respond to changes in priorities and resources during the implementation of the OP?



experts from other countries and diverse fields (e.g., academia) would enrich the spaces for dialogue among the actors of the reception system, fostered by the implementation of this OP.

**The efficiency of the intervention is judged to be good as resources were spent efficiently, especially as regards measure 3, and no additional resources needed to be spent despite introducing a new measure in May 2022.** However, it should be noted that in measures 1 and 2 not everything that was planned was realised, so it is not possible to say whether the inputs of the OP would have been sufficient for their full implementation.

**The relevance of this OP was confirmed by the fact that the next iteration of OP provides continuity to most of the measures included in the OP 2022-2023.** Moreover, the EUAA's capacity to adapt to changes in social and institutional priorities was visible, as well as its rapid and effective response to the requests expressed by the authorities. This was seen, for instance, with the inclusion of measure 4 to address the challenges of implementing the TPD and in its integration into the CREADE team. Another example of this was the Agency's capacity to adapt to the restructuring of the SEM into two directorates general. In this regard, the expansion of the EUAA's presence and the consolidation of a permanent working team was crucial.

Regarding the internal and external coherence of the OP, most of the stakeholders consulted highlighted **that the four priority measures of the OP were complementary and that coordination between actors and strategies was key to their implementation.** Finally, the EU added value of the OP was considered to be very good. The EUAA's support was specially valued by the SEM and other authorities who agreed that, while changes would have eventually taken place without the support of the EUAA, they would have done so at a slower pace and would have potentially been less in line with European standards. In any case, it is important to note that the EUAA has responsibilities assigned to it by the European Commission that cannot be carried out by any other stakeholder in the European context (relocation workflow) and that its support is currently crucial to the functioning of the CARs.

The table below presents a scoring for each criterion and each measure, formulated on the basis of the results presented in this report. The ratings cover the spectrum from fair to very good. The highest ratings across all measures relate to relevance, coherence and EU added value. There are no dimensions where the evidence pointed to poor performance, especially considering the limited timeframe for the implementation of the projected outcomes.

Table 1. Scoring of achievements of the Spain OP 2022-23

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4
<b>Relevance<sup>15</sup></b>	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good
<b>Effectiveness<sup>16</sup></b>	Fair	Good	Very good	Very good
<b>Efficiency</b>	Good	Good	Very good	Very good
<b>Coherence<sup>17</sup></b>	Very good	Very good	Very good	Good

<sup>15</sup> The needs assessment prior to the planning of the OP and what was said in the interviews have been taken into account.

<sup>16</sup> Based on the 2022 and 2023 results reports, as well as on the assessments given by the interviewees.

<sup>17</sup> Outcome of the opinions expressed in the interviews.





	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4
EU added value <sup>18</sup>	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

## 5.2. Good practices and lessons learnt

**At least five good practices can be drawn from the implementation of the Spain OP 2022-2023:**

1. The collaboration across the EUAA's centres, which made it possible to maintain coherence between the measures and provide effective solutions to the challenges faced;
2. The networking fostered by the Agency through the focal points and the various working groups, which made it possible to give continuity to the OP actions even during the different institutional changes experienced;
3. The organisation of the training plan according to different profiles, which favoured the meeting of personnel from different entities, the exchange of experiences, and the cohesion of groups carrying out similar tasks;
4. The design and implementation of the hotline in the CREADEs, given that it sped up the provision of information and broadened its areas of dissemination to more potential beneficiaries;
5. The expansion of the CAR's services, given the introduction of specialisations which improved the comprehensiveness of the assistance provided.

**In terms of priority question 1<sup>19</sup> and the lessons learned as the first OP to centre specifically on reception, the following are particularly relevant:**

1. When initiating the planning of an OP, the EUAA's realisation of the need to adapt to the particular characteristics of the country, including both the migratory reality and the organisational model of the administration, its working conditions and the way of approaching the authorities;
2. The flexibility required to adjust plans to changes in the environment, obstacles and resistance encountered as well as unforeseen events, without losing focus on the projected objectives;
3. The need to assess the degree to which the implementation of the designed OP (prospective) would be achievable to avoid complex and ambitious objectives that are difficult to achieve in a limited timeframe;
4. Given the mixed nature of the Spanish model, the EUAA, further to a request by the SEM, recognised the importance of the participation of the different actors of the system – governmental and non-governmental – in the activities and consultation spaces associated with the OP;
5. The development and piloting of tools designed/prototyped by the EUAA (such as the ARC tool adapted to the Spanish context).

## 5.3. Recommendations

This section proposes recommendations to help respond to the challenges found in the evaluation of the Spain OP 2022-2023 and provides recommendations for future actions.

<sup>18</sup> Outcome of the opinions expressed in the interview.

<sup>19</sup> What lessons can be learned from the Spain OP, as the first OP to be exclusively focused on reception?



**Recommendation 1. Ensure better alignment between the OP measures and the timetable foreseen for their implementation, adapting to changes as relevant.**

- Carry out prospective planning and monitoring (with the SEM's agreement) to identify potential obstacles to timely implementation, design possible alternatives, streamline decision making and reorientate the OP's implementation over time.
- This planning, in addition to anticipating changes in the context, should take into account the actors and their capacities (e.g., the organisational structure of the administration and the specific roles of stakeholders).

**Recommendation 2. Promote a knowledge management model.**

The model should, in a structured and systematic way, translate the experience gained by the different actors during the implementation of the OP into lessons learned, and systematise the initiatives of the Spanish reception model that can contribute to its success. In this way, the knowledge generated in practice can be further exploited to achieve the projected results and optimise the decision-making process. The model could include the activities of identification, adaptation, transfer or socialisation, storage and the application of information.

**Recommendation 3. Adopt a change management approach that promotes the participation of the actors involved, as well as agility, flexibility, innovation, and critical thinking in the implementation of measures.**

- Introduce mechanisms (sessions, workshops, material, etc.) to keep technical teams informed about the planned changes, their consequences, the actions to be implemented, and their role in them. Information should be clear, up-to-date and easy to find.
- Elaborate, with the agreement of the SEM, maps of actors including those outside the OP, to identify the impact they may have on the activities.
- Ensure that protocols are flexible enough to adapt to the capacities of different actors and their workload, including when conditions change.
- Reinforce the training plan areas that foster this capacity among teams, through innovation, critical thinking, resilience and other soft skills.

**Recommendation 4. Assess the need among the Spanish authorities to expand the pool of external trainers in the training plan.**

This could be achieved by involving more experts external to the Spanish authorities and CSOs already involved (e.g., experts from academia) to broaden perspectives on the topics being worked on.



## Annex 1: Methodology and analytical models used

The evaluation took a mixed methods approach, combining the use of existing sources of evidence with primary data collection, notably through interviews.

**Desk research** included the Agency's monitoring data, the OP document itself, the needs assessment, and to a lesser degree statistics on asylum and reception which were used as contextual background information.

In terms of **interviews**, the evaluation made use of evidence collected through a total of 13 interviews. The consulted stakeholders include relevant staff members from the EUAA, the relevant Spanish authorities, CSOs, UNHCR and the relevant EU representative.

The collected primary and secondary evidence underwent a process of **triangulation and synthesis**, with a view to deriving robust, evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions, and formulate conclusions and lessons learnt for the future on that basis.

The **conclusions and lessons learned**, as well as **recommendations** resulting from them, have been validated with the Agency's personnel after the submission of the draft report to ensure they are valid and appropriate, and workable given any contextual constraints faced by the Agency and/or other stakeholders.

### ***Robustness and limitations of the evaluation***

The evaluation process faced a significant challenge due to the tight timeline allocated for conducting data collection activities, analysing the data, triangulating the findings, and reporting the results prior to the submission of the draft final report. Efforts were made in the final report to enhance the robustness of the evaluation by further strengthening the triangulation of both primary and secondary data collected.

An additional aspect to keep in mind concerns the object of the evaluation and the difficulties measuring the impact of the intervention. Institutional change is a complex and long-term process that often unfolds gradually over time. Its effects may not be immediately observable or quantifiable, making it difficult to assess the precise impact within the given timeframe. This inherent time lag between implementing interventions and observing tangible outcomes adds further complexity to the evaluation process and necessitates a nuanced understanding of the intervention's long-term effects.



## Annex 2: Intervention logic

Figure 1. EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 intervention logic





1.1 Strengthened capacity of the SEM within the framework of the design and implementation of the new reception model

1.2 Strengthened capacity of the SEM on organisational change management

1.3 Support provided to increase the capacity, according to EU standards, of the state-managed reception network

1.4 Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on optimisation of data management across the reception system

1.5 Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities to identify, access, plan and manage available funding mechanisms

### **Measure 2: Reception management**

2.1 Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on reception site management and coordination

2.2 Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to reception and vulnerability

2.3 Enhanced preparedness and response to emergencies

2.4. Strengthened and supporting the implementation of the national resettlement or relocation programmes and schemes

### **Measure 3: Training**

3.1 Strengthened knowledge, skills and attitudes of the personnel working in the Spanish reception system

3.2 Strengthened capacity of the national authorities to train their personnel and partner entities through establishing national pool of trainers

### **Measure 4: TPD**

4.1 Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on reception site coordination for the beneficiaries of temporary protection in the Centres for Reception, Attention and Derivation

4.2 Strengthened capacity of the national reception authorities on the harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to reception of beneficiaries of temporary protection

### **Activities**

Support in the definition and implementation of a new model of reception system

Support with the design, planning and implementation of the required institutional changes for the implementation of the new reception model

Support with the identification and preparation of suitable land and buildings for new reception centres

Support with the technical site design, planning and development of reception centres

Support with the design, piloting and implementation of a new digital architecture including developing new data management tools

Optimisation of data management across the service



Support with the definition of an indicator system to allocate applicants/beneficiaries to the appropriate reception system

Support to strengthen the capacity of the Sub-directorate General of Strategic Planning and European Funds to identify, access and plan for the management of available funding mechanisms

Support for the management of existing and new centres under direct SEM management

Support for the coordination with other relevant national and regional institutions and actors

Establishment/rollout of an Assessment Reception Conditions National Framework

Support with the drafting and implementing standardised site management procedures, workflows and tools

Support for enhancement of vulnerability workflows

Support for enhancement of a standardised and systematised provision of information across the territory

Support for enhancement of emergency response and coordination

Support for enhancement of the capacity of the SEM on contingency planning at national level

Capacity building to manage/propose allocation to emergency centres liaising with relevant actors engaged in disembarkations

Promotion of participation of the authorities in the activities of the EUAA's Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network and its dedicated working groups

Support with the fulfilment of resettlement and/or relocation commitments

Review of existing resettlement/relocation programmes

Support in establishing and implementing the annual training plan

Translation and interpretation of training material

Support with the development and implementation of training

Participation of Spanish reception professionals to the EUAA Train-the-Trainer sessions

Joint assessment of needs with regards to temporary protection in Spain and the ongoing response

Support to centre organisational flow management, data management and administrative support

Support information provision regarding temporary protection

Support for design and implementation of workflows as well as drafting of standard operating procedures

Training and capacity building in relation to the TPD

### Inputs

*Human resources* – various, including reception experts, high-level experts, consultants, interpreters, flow managers, staff specialised in integrated reception-related strategic planning, organisational systems and change management experts; experts in design and delivery of national reception services, etc., structural and EU funding mechanisms experts, data expert/ IT project officers, vulnerability experts, legal experts, monitoring & evaluation experts, trainers



*Material resources – e.g., equipment, services, communication/promotional material, infrastructure items, IT equipment, office supplies and printing*

*Financial resources invested from the EUAA's core budget*

#### **External factors**

Specific circumstances on the ground; national and international rules / laws; availability of financial and human resources; other actions by the authorities, the International Organisation for Migration, UNHCR, other international organisations, CSOs; humanitarian crises



## Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Table 2: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
<b>Relevance:</b> To what extent was the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 significant to the needs of the Spanish reception authorities?	<p><b>Priority question:</b> What lessons can be learned from the Spain OP, as the first OP to be exclusively focused on reception?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention in Spain relevant to meet the needs of the partner organisations? How well has the EUAA been able to respond to the partner organisations' needs?</p> <p>To what extent did the scope and intended results of the intervention in Spain remain relevant over the implementation period? If the needs changed over time, was the intervention adapted accordingly?</p> <p>To what extent do the needs/problems addressed by the intervention in Spain continue to require action by the EUAA? Will the intervention continue to be relevant in the foreseeable future?</p>	✓	✓
<b>Effectiveness:</b> To what extent have the expected outcomes of the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 been achieved? Where expectations have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement?	<p>To what extent was the intervention implemented as envisaged? Which activities were and were not implemented and why?</p> <p>Were there any problems related to the implementation and application of the OP? If so, which ones and why?</p> <p><b>Priority question:</b> How has the EUAA responded to unforeseen challenges (e.g. war in Ukraine, staff turnover) and was the response sufficient?<sup>20</sup></p> <p>To what extent were the expected <u>outputs</u> achieved? If there were shortcomings, what (internal and external) factors caused these?</p> <p>To what extent were the expected <u>outcomes</u> achieved? If there were shortcomings, what (internal and external) factors caused these?</p>	✓	✓

<sup>20</sup> This question is related to effectiveness and efficiency.





Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
	<p>To what extent has progress towards the overall aim (intended impact) of the intervention been made? To what extent can this progress be linked to the OP?</p> <p>Can any (unintended) social or environmental impacts be observed that are linked to the EUAA's intervention?</p>		
<b>Efficiency:</b>	<p>What inputs (costs, full-time equivalents, time investments) were associated with the implementation of the OP? How did these inputs compare to what was planned?</p> <p>Were these inputs sufficient to achieve the intended outputs/outcomes? Why or why not?</p> <p>To what extent has the governance structure of the Agency supported its ability to perform its tasks, having regard to its size, composition, organisation and work processes?</p> <p>Have there been any challenges to the efficient implementation of the intervention? If so, which (internal or external) factors affected its efficient implementation and how did the EUAA mitigate them?</p> <p>Have any inefficiencies been identified? If so, how could these be addressed to increase the efficiency of the intervention / of future interventions?</p> <p>How timely and efficient was the intervention's administrative process (e.g., for reporting and monitoring)? Were there any inefficiencies associated with these processes?</p>	✓	✓
<b>Coherence:</b> To what extent was the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023 coherent with the EUAA's actions more generally and with other interventions which have similar objectives? To what extent has the OP proved	<p>To what extent has the Spain OP, as the first OP to be exclusively focused on reception, been aligned with and/or influenced the implementation of the EUAA's reception strategy?</p> <p>What other interventions, implemented by the EU, national authorities, international organisations, or civil society organisations existed in Spain that had similar objectives to the OP?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention coherent with other <u>EU interventions</u> that had similar</p>	✓	✓



Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
complementary to others in the field?	<p>intended results? Were synergies actively sought to promote the ‘Team Europe’ approach and were possible overlaps avoided?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention coherent with other <u>national interventions</u> that had similar intended results? Were synergies actively sought and possible overlaps avoided? Why or why not?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention coherent with other <u>interventions implemented by international organisations or civil society organisations</u> that had similar intended results? Were synergies actively sought and possible overlaps avoided? Why or why not?</p>		
<p><b>EU added value:</b> What is the additional EU added value resulting from the EUAA’s activities in Spain, compared to what could be achieved by the authorities alone?</p>	<p>What has been the EU added value of the EUAA’s intervention compared to those of other actors?</p> <p>Could the intended results of the intervention have been achieved sufficiently by the Spanish authorities acting alone?</p> <p>Were the intended results met more efficiently by the EUAA than they would have been met by the Spanish authorities (e.g., larger benefits per unit cost stemming from economies of scale)?</p> <p>Is it still valid to assume that the intended results of the intervention can best be met by action by the EUAA? What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the EUAA’s intervention?</p>	✓	✓

## Annex 4: Follow-up to the 2021 recommendations

The table below sets out the progress made in 2022 in relation to the recommendations of the evaluation of the Spain OP 2021.

Table 3. Recommendations from 2021 evaluation

Recommendation	Agency response	Status of implementation (as of 06/2023)	Progress / achievements (as of 06/2023)
1.1 Create a database of potential individual and organisational collaborators (such as universities, NGOs, think tanks, and small and medium-sized enterprises) in Spain, including individuals who are fluent in Spanish and English and have knowledge of reception.	1.1. Further systematise the overview of collaborators (partially available already).	Implementation concluded	
1.2 Increase the visibility of the EUAA as an agency providing support to Spain in the area of reception in Spain by spreading the word through its existing Member State networks, and networks and partners in Spain.	1.2.A Recruit external experts (increasing number of channels). 1.2.B. Recruit temporary workers (publication through local channels by a leading agency). 1.2.C Reach out to the SEM and encourage them to join various EUAA networks.	Implementation concluded	Expected to happen through the increase of EUAA activities and presence in various locations across the country (across the peninsula and in the Canary Islands). Encouraging network participation proves challenging.
1.3. Where EUAA's staff policy can accommodate such a change, look into the possibility of amending the requirements for experts, including by requiring experts working in the field to be knowledgeable in	1.3.A. Amend some of the profiles in the existing call for remunerated experts in asylum support teams. 1.3.B. Carefully formulate specific requirements for experts from the roster to be interviewed for	Implementation concluded	This is an ongoing activity. More flexibility required; the distinction between experts 'in the field' and in coordination roles is black and white – also



Recommendation	Agency response	Status of implementation (as of 06/2023)	Progress / achievements (as of 06/2023)
<p>reception and fluent in Spanish only, while requiring those in coordination/senior management roles to speak both English and Spanish. These senior staff members can then act as a bridge between operations in the field and EUAA headquarters.</p>	<p>positions in the Spain operations.</p> <p>1.3.C. Carefully formulate job descriptions and requirements for experts under the new framework contract for temporary workers.</p>		<p>in terms of language requirements.</p>
<p>2.1. Explore mechanisms for gathering and consolidating existing data into a Spanish system for the management of reception data. This should entail an assessment of the quality and completeness of existing data on reception.</p>	<p>2.1.A. Provide experts to assess and strengthen analytical capacity and develop standardised data collection tools.</p> <p>2.1.B. Provide support to internal coordination mechanisms within the SEM (between different Directorates-General/Sub-directorates General) – in particular working groups and periodic meetings (weekly/monthly/quarterly).</p> <p>2.1.C. Reach out to the SEM to encourage their participation in EUAA networks on reception statistics and research to exchange practices with other EU Member States.</p>	<p>Implementation concluded (2.1.A)</p> <p>Under implementation (2.1.B)</p> <p>Implementation concluded (2.1.C)</p>	<p>This is already ongoing – with a focus rather on the assessment of quality, completeness and in particular consistency rather than mechanisms of gathering (data collection in itself is substantive) with a view to improving data reporting and analysis for policy and decision-making purposes. Four experts were deployed since Q1 2023 to develop a data management app, an alert system for reception based on consolidated indicators and to improve data management of a specific reception programme.</p>
<p>2.2. On the basis of the assessment, define what data should form part of the data</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The actions for this recommendation are already addressed in recommendation 2.1.</p>



Recommendation	Agency response	Status of implementation (as of 06/2023)	Progress / achievements (as of 06/2023)
management system, devise a methodology for gathering the data, and a mechanism for ensuring its use (processing, analysis and reporting).			
3.1. Improve the quality, from the point of view of legality, of all procedures related to reception. This must be consolidated in one short document of reference after consulting the members of the related working group.	The reception decree had already been approved. Not accepted as it falls outside the scope of the Agency's mandate.	N/A	N/A
3.2. Continue disseminating the 'future' new model (once approved) through specific <i>ad hoc</i> training sessions among relevant stakeholders.	Include information on the dissemination of the new reception model in already existing training sessions. Explore the provision of <i>ad hoc</i> or specific training sessions on the new reception model.	Implementation concluded	The new reception model has been approved (Royal decree 220/2022, 29 March 2022) and the dissemination of the information on the new model was assumed by the national authority.
3.3. Evaluate the model (once created), with support from the reception model working group and considering future changes (if required).	Not accepted as it falls outside the scope of the Agency's mandate.	N/A	N/A
4.1. Adjust, with a view to the renewal of successive stages of operational support to Spain, the definition of the measures (and, consequently, of their	4.1. Complete the revision of the OP. This may imply redefining priorities in the original OP and consequently revising the budget.	Implementation concluded	Addressed in the EUAA-Spain OP 2022-2023



Recommendation	Agency response	Status of implementation (as of 06/2023)	Progress / achievements (as of 06/2023)
indicators and outputs) to provide a better fit with the established timeline.			
4.2. Consider further structuring the needs assessment methodology by clearly defining roles and responsibilities of different actors, with a view to more realistically assessing the temporary resource deployment capacities required for each action envisaged in each specific measure. This working group should also consider what is happening in other countries where the EUAA is developing OPs.	4.2. Ensure feasibility filters in the upcoming next needs assessment exercise assessing the temporary resource deployment needs for each specific measure.	Implementation concluded	Challenges around deployment and timelines are not to be attributed to the needs assessment methodology (which is nevertheless being reviewed by the relevant horizontal sector in C1). Experiences in other countries with EUAA OPs were taken into consideration as well. Counterpart absorption issues and elaborate EUAA administrative processes played a much stronger part. That said, in line with existing needs assessment methodology, feasibility filters could be applied more rigorously in future assessments.
5.1. Reassess the short, medium, and long-term technical and operational capacities of the partners with whom the EUAA implements OPs.	5.1. Reassess the technical and operational capacities of partners in the OP revision and next need assessment.	Implementation concluded	Note that said capacities are difficult to assess in a first-time collaboration with new partners; a certain level of experience and trust needs to be gained.
5.2. Adapt, on the basis of this assessment, the actions to be carried out within each measure to	Partially accepted	N/A	The action to be undertaken for the recommendation is covered under the



Recommendation	Agency response	Status of implementation (as of 06/2023)	Progress / achievements (as of 06/2023)
avoid creating a mismatch between what is planned and the absorption capacity of the partners.			previous recommendation and 5.1 (in terms of absorption capacity). Such adaptation follows any new needs assessment or revision of existing plans.